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Newmont makes progress on slide

By ADELLA HARDING - Staff Writer

ELKO - Work by Newmont Mining Corp. crews should begin exposing the long stretch of Newmont Mine Road six miles north of Carlin that was buried by a mudslide.

"The road will be exposed soon. They will start on the 5-foot cover in the next couple of days, and then we'll look at the pavement," Jeff White, Newmont's regional environmental manager, said Thursday.

The mudslide happened Feb. 5, when Newmont's waste-rock dump to the west side of the highway north of Carlin failed, sending tons of rock and dirt onto the road and knocking out power.

The final 5 feet of cover was protecting the roadway while haul trucks move tons of rock and dirt from the slide site, White said as a panel of experts viewed the work done so far.

Newmont has moved thousands of tons of rock and dirt from above the slide and from the highway since Nevada Division of Environmental Protection assembled the panel and it visited the site in early March.

The committee returned to Gold Quarry Mine Thursday for an update on Newmont's progress.

The company hired an outside geotechnical firm, Call & Nicholas Inc. from Arizona, to conduct a third-party investigation into the slide, and the firm brought in a special drill to bore holes for site samples.

"It's in the data analysis stage. Samples went to the lab, and they are monitoring conditions out here," said Dave Gaskin, chief of the NDEP's Bureau of Mining Regulation and Reclamation and the panel chairman.

"It will take months to finish testing samples from the bore holes," said NDEP spokeswoman Cindy Petterson, who also is on the panel.

Newmont initially focused on removing the slide from the highway while vehicles detoured around the toe of the slide, but refocused its efforts on the top of the dump when it appeared the earth was still moving.



Nevada Division of Environmental Protection's advisory panel formed to review Newmont Mining Corp.'s progress in remediating a waste-rock dump failure that covered Newmont Mine Road gathers on site Thursday. From left are: Cindy Petterson, NDEP spokesman; Del Fortner, U.S. Bureau of Land Management; Rory Lamp, Nevada Department of Wildlife; Dave Gaskin, chief of NDEP's Bureau of Mining Regulation and Reclamation; Mike Murphy, Nevada Department of Transportation; Robert Watters, University of Nevada, Reno; Ali Soltani, Newmont's director of Nevada operations; Jeff White, Newmont's regional environmental manager; Eric Bates, Newmont geotechnical engineer; Paul Pryor, Call & Nicholas Inc. (Adella Harding/Elko Daily Free Press)

Crews have since finished moving roughly 900,000 tons of material from the top of the 10-million-ton dump and moving it to other waste-rock dumps at the mine, White said. They've also nearly finished removing more than 1 million tons of rock and dirt from the low end of the slide and the highway, moving the waste-rock to two new dumps established nearby.

NDEP approved the new dumps for temporary use, and Gaskin said the material placed on them is "benign," so they probably can become permanent dumps to be reclaimed.

The slide stopped before reaching Maggie Creek, and Rory Lamp of the Nevada Department of Wildlife and a member of the panel, said Newmont "has done a good job protecting aquatic resources in the creek."

Gaskin said the panel is continuing to keep all theories of what happened on the table. Those theories included a small earthquake and extremely wet ground conditions.

"We want to come up with an objective analysis of the cause and what to do about it," he said.

Petterson said today that the next committee meeting will be a teleconference on May 19.

"I think everyone in the group was pleased with the progress," she said.

-- CLOSE WINDOW --